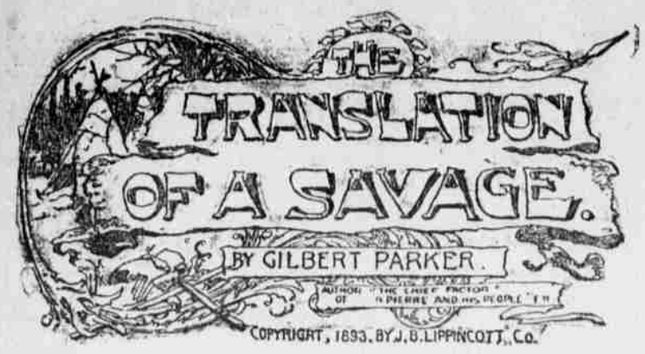

CHAPTER I.

It appeared that Armour had made the great mistake of his life. When people came to know, they said that to have done it when sober had shown him possessed of a kind of maliciousness and cynicism almost pardonable, but to do it when tipsy proved him merely weak and foolish. But the fact is he was less tipsy at the time than was imagined, and he could have answered to more malice and cynicism than were credited to him. To those who know the world it is not singular that of the two Armour was thought to have made the mistake and had the misfortune or that people wasted their pity and their scorn upon him alone. Apparently they did not see that the woman was to be pitied. He had married her, and she was only an Indian girl from Fort Charles of the Hudson's Bay company, with a little honest white blood in her veins. Nobody, not even her own people, felt that she had anything at stake or was in danger of unhappiness or was other than a person who had indicrously come to bear the name of Mrs. Francis Armour. If any one had said in justification that she loved the man, the answer would have been that plenty of Indian women had loved white men, but had not married them, and yet the population of half breeds went on increasing.

Frank Armour had been a popular man in London. His club might be found in the vicinity of Pall Mall, his father's name was high and honored in the army list, one of his brothers had served with Wolseley in Africa, and himself, having no profession, but with a taste for business and investment, had gone to Canada with some such intention as Lord Selkirk's in the early part of the century. He owned large shares in the Hudson's Bay company, and when he traveled through the northwest country prospecting he was received most hospitably.

Of an inquiring and gregarious turn of mind, he went as much among the half breeds—or metis, as they are called—and Indians as among the officers of the Hudson's Bay company and the white settlers. He had ever been credited with having a philosophical turn, and this was accompanied by a certain strain of impulsiveness or daring. He had been accustomed all his life to make up his mind quickly, and because he was well enough off to bear the consequences of momentary rashness in commercial investments he was not counted among the transgressors. He had his own fortune. He was not drawing upon a common purse. It was a different matter when he trafficked rashly in the family name, so far as to marry the daughter of Eye-of-the-Moon, the Indian chief.

He was tolerably happy when he went to the Hudson bay country, for Miss Julia Sherwood was his promised wife, and she, if poor, was notably beautiful and of good family. His people had not looked quite kindly on this engagement. They had indeed tried in many ways to prevent it, partly because of Miss Sherwood's poverty, and also because they knew that Lady Agnes Martling had long cared for him and was most happily endowed with wealth and good looks also. When he left for Canada, they were inwardly glad (they imagined that something might occur to end the engagement)—all except Richard, the wiseacre of the family, the bookman, the drone, who preferred living at Greyhope, their Hertfordshire home, the year through to spending half the time in Cavendish square. Richard was very fond of Frank, admiring him immensely for his buxom strength and cleverness and not a little, too, for that very rashness which had brought him such havoc at last.

Richard was not, as Frank used to say, "perfectly sound on his pins"—that is, he was slightly lame—but he was right at heart. He was an immense reader, but made little use of what he read. He had an abundant humor and remembered every anecdote he ever heard. He was kind to the poor, walked much, talked to himself as he walked and was known by the humble sort as "a 'centric." But he had a wise head, and he foresaw danger to Frank's happiness when he went away. While others had gossiped and maneuvered and were busily idle, he had watched things. He saw that Frank was dear to Julia in proportion to the distance between her and young Lord Haldwell, whose father had done something remarkable in guns or torpedoes and was rewarded with a lordship and an uncommonly large fortune. He also saw that after Frank left the distance between Lord Haldwell and Julia became distinctly less. They were both staying at Greyhope. Julia Sherwood was a remarkably clever girl. Though he felt it his duty to speak to her for his brother—a difficult and delicate matter—he thought it would come better from his mother.

But when he took action it was too late. Miss Sherwood naively declared that she had not known her own heart and that she did not care for Frank any more. She wept a little and was soothed by motherly Mrs. Armour, who was inwardly glad, though she knew the matter would cause Frank pain, and even General Armour could not help showing slight satisfaction, though he was innocent of any deliberate action to separate the two. Straightway Miss Sherwood dispatched a letter to the wilds of Canada, and for a week was an unengaged young person. But she was no doubt consoled by the fact that for some time past she had complete control of Lord Haldwell's emotions. At the end of the week her perceptions were justified by Lord Haldwell's proposal, which, with admirable tact and obvious demureness, was accepted.

Now Frank was wandering much in the wilds, so that his letters and papers went careering about after him, and some that came first were the last to reach him. That was how he received a newspaper announcing the marriage of Lord Haldwell and Julia Sherwood at the same time that her letter, written in estimable English and with admirable feeling, came, begging for a release from their engagement, and, toward its close, assuming, with a charming regret, that all was over, and that the last word had been said between them.

He was sitting in the trader's room at Fort Charles when the carrier came with the mails. He had had some successful days hunting buffalo with Eye-of-the-Moon and a little band of metis, had had a long powwow in Eye-of-the-Moon's lodge, had chatted gayly with Lali, the dang'ter, and was now prepared to enjoy heartily the arrears of correspondence and news before him. He ran his hand through the letters and papers, intending to classify them immediately, according to such handwriting as he recognized and the dates on the envelopes. But as he did so he saw a newspaper from which the wrapper was partly torn. He also saw a note in the margin directing him to a certain page. The note was in Richard's handwriting. He opened the paper at the page indicated and saw the account of the marriage. His teeth clinched on his cigar; his face turned white; the paper fell from his fingers. He gasped; his hands spread out nervously, then caught the table and held it as though to steady himself.

The trader rose. "You are ill," he said. "Have you bad news?" He glanced toward the paper.

Slowly Armour folded the paper up and then rose unsteadily. "Gordon," he said, "give me a glass of brandy." He turned toward the cupboard in the room. The trader opened it, took out

"Have you bad news?"

a bottle and put it on the table beside Armour, together with a glass and some water. Armour poured out a stiff draft, added a very little water and drank it. He drew a great sigh and stood looking at the paper.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Armour?" urged the trader.

"Nothing, thank you, nothing at all. Just leave the brandy here, will you? I feel knocked about, and I have to go through the rest of these letters."

He ran his fingers through the pile, turning it over hastily, as if searching for something. The trader understood. He was a cool headed Scotsman. He knew that there were some things best not inquired into, and that men must have their bad hours alone. He glanced at the brandy debatingly, but presently turned and left the room in silence. In his own mind, however, he wished he might have taken the brandy without being discourteous. Armour had discovered Miss Sherwood's letter. Before he opened it he took a little more brandy. Then he sat down and read it deliberately. The liquor had steadied him. The fingers of one hand even drummed on the table. But the face was drawn, the eyes were hard, and the look of him was altogether pinched. After he had finished this he looked for others from the same hand. He found none. Then he picked out those from his mother and father. He read them grimly.

Once he paused as he read his mother's letter and took a great gulp of plain brandy. There was something very like a sneer on his face when he finished it. He read the hollowness of the sympathy extended to him. He understood the far from adroit references to Lady Agnes Martling. He was very bitter. He read no more letters, but took up The Morning Post again and read it slowly through. The look of his face was not pleasant. There was a small looking glass opposite him. He caught sight of himself in it. He drew his hand across his eyes and forehead, as though he was in a miserable dream. He looked again. He could not recognize himself.

He then bundled the letters and papers into his dispatch box. His attention was drawn to one letter. He picked it up. It was from Richard. He started to break the seal, but paused. The strain of the event was too much. He winced. He determined not to read it then, to wait until he had recovered himself. He laughed now painfully. It had been better for him—it had maybe averted what people used to term his tragedy—had he read his brother's letter at that moment, for Richard Armour was a sensible man, notwithstanding his peculiarities, and perhaps the most sensible words he ever wrote were in that letter thrust unceremoniously into Frank Armour's pocket.

Armour had received a terrible blow. He read his life backward. He had no future. The liquor he had drunk had not fevered him. It had not wildly excited him. It merely drew him up to a point where he could put a sudden impulse into practice without flinching. He was bitter against his people. He credited them with more interference than was actual. He felt that happiness had gone out of his life and left him hopeless. As we said, he was a man of quick decisions. He would have made a dashing but reckless soldier. He was not without the elements of the gamester. It is possible that there was in him also a strain of cruelty, undeveloped, but radical.

Life so far had developed the best in him. He had been cheery and candid. Now he traveled back into new avenues of his mind and found strange aboriginal passions fully adapted to the present situation. Vulgar anger and reproaches were not after his nature. He suddenly found sources of refined retaliation. He drew upon them. He would do something to humiliate his people and the girl who had spoiled his life. Some one thing! It would be absolute and lasting. It would show how low had fallen his opinion of women, of whom Julia Sherwood had once been chiefest to him. In that he would show his scorn of her. He would bring down the pride of his family, who, he believed, had helped out of mere selfishness to tumble his happiness into the shambles.

He was older by years than an hour ago. But he was not without the faculty of humor. That was why he did not become very excited; it was also why he determined upon a comedy which should have all the elements of tragedy. Perhaps, however, he had not carried his purposes to immediate conclusions were it not that the very gods seemed to play his game with him, for while he stood there looking out into the yard of the fort a Protestant missionary passed the window. The Protestant missionary, as he is found at such places as Fort Charles, is not a strictly superior person. A Jesuit might have been of advantage to Frank Armour at that moment. The Protestant missionary is not above comfortable assurances of gold. So that when Armour summoned this one in and told him what was required of him and slipped a generous gift of the queen's coin into his hand he smiled vaguely and was willing to do what he was bidden. Had he been a Jesuit, who is sworn to poverty and more often than not a man of birth and education, he might have influenced Frank Armour and prevented the notable mishap and scandal. As it was, Armour took more brandy.

Then he went down to Eye-of-the-Moon's lodge. A few hours afterward the missionary met him there. The next morning Lali, the daughter of Eye-of-the-Moon and the chieftainess of a portion of her father's tribe, whose grandfather had been a white man, was introduced to the Hudson bay country as Mrs Frank Armour. But that was not all. Indeed as it stood it was very little. He had only made his comedy possible as yet. Now the play itself was to come. He had carried his scheme through boldly so far. He would not flinch in carrying it out to the last letter. He brought his wife down to the great lakes immediately, scarcely resting night or day. There he engaged an ordinary but reliable woman, to whom he gave instructions, and sent the pair to the coast. He instructed his solicitor at Montreal to procure passages for Mrs. Francis Armour and maid for Liverpool. Then by letters he instructed his solicitor in London to meet Mrs. Francis Armour and maid at Liverpool and take them to Greyhope in Hertfordshire—that is, if General Armour and Mrs. Armour or some representative of the family did not meet them when they landed from the steamship.

Presently he sat down and wrote to his father and mother and asked them to meet his wife and her maid when they arrived by the steamer Aphrodite. He did not explain to them in precise detail his feelings on Miss Julia Sherwood's marriage, nor did he go into full particulars as to the personality of Mrs. Frank Armour, but he did say that because he knew they were anxious that he should marry "acceptably" he had married into aristocracy, the oldest aristocracy of America, and because he also knew they wished him to marry wealth he sent them a wife rich in virtues—native, unspoiled virtues.

He hoped that they would take her to their hearts and cherish her. He knew their firm principles of honor, and that he could trust them to be kind to his wife until he returned to share the affection which he was sure would be given to her. It was not his intention to return to England for some time yet. He had work to do in connection with his proposed colony, and a wife, even a native wife, could not well be a companion in the circumstances. Besides Lali—his wife's name was Lali—would be better occupied in learning the peculiarities of the life in which her future would be cast. It was possible they would find her an apt pupil. Of this they could not complain that she was untraveled, for she had ridden a horse, bareback, half across the continent. They could not cavil at her education, for she knew several languages—aboriginal languages—of the north. She had merely to learn the dialect of English society and how to carry with acceptable form the costumes of the race to which she was going. Her own costume was picturesque, but it might appear unusual in London society. Still they could use their own judgment about that.

Then, when she was gone beyond recall, he chanced one day to put on the coat he wore when the letters and paper declaring his misfortune came to him. He found his brother's letter; he opened it and read it. It was the letter of a man who knew how to appreciate at their proper value the misfortunes as the fortunes of life. While Frank Armour read he came to feel for the first time that his brother Richard had suffered, maybe, from some such misery as had come to him through Julia Sherwood. It was a dispassionate, manly letter, relieved by a gentle wit and hinting with a careful kindness that a sudden blow was better for a man than a lifelong thorn in his side. Of Julia Sherwood he had nothing particularly bitter to say. He delicately suggested that she acted according to her nature, and that in the seesaw of life Frank had had a sore blow, but this was to be borne.

The letter did not say too much. It did not magnify the difficulty. It did not depreciate it. It did not even directly counsel. It was wholesomely, tenderly judicial. Indirectly it dwelt upon the steadiness and manliness of Frank's character. Directly, lightly and without rhetoric it enlarged upon their own comradeship. It ran over pleasantly the days of their boyhood when they were hardly ever separated. It made distinct, yet with no obvious purpose, how good were friendship and confidence—which might be the most unselfish thing in the world—between two men. With the letter before him Frank Armour saw his act in a new light.

As we said, it is possible if he had read it on the day when his trouble came to him he had not married Lali nor sent her to England on this—to her—involuntary mission of revenge. It is possible also that there came to him the first vague conception of the wrong he had done this Indian girl, who undoubtedly married him because she cared for him after her heathen fashion, while he had married her for nothing that was commendable, not even for passion, which may be pardoned, nor for vanity, which has its virtues. He had had his hour with circumstance. Circumstance would have its hour with him in due time. Yet there was no extraordinary revulsion. He was still angry, cynical and very sore. He would see the play out with a consistent firmness. He almost managed a smile when a letter was handed to him some weeks later, bearing his solicitor's assurance that Mrs. Frank Armour and her maid had been safely bestowed on the Aphrodite for England. This was the first act in his tragic comedy.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Wadell's Experience with a Burglar.

"I had a queer experience with a burglar in a Minneapolis hotel during the Republican convention," said Ferd E. Wadell. "When I retired I turned the key, but without having the door quite closed, and as a result the bolt did not enter the lock. About 2 o'clock I was awakened by a slight noise. A street light shone into the room, and I could plainly see a man rifling my pockets. I had both watch and purse under my pillow, but was unarmed. I at first thought I would not take chances on getting hurt by molesting the fellow, but when I saw him coolly appropriating a scarfpin that my wife had given me, I changed my mind and said to him very quietly, 'I guess you don't need that.'

"He started toward the door, but a spirit of recklessness had seized me and I ordered him to stop. Evidently thinking me armed, he did so. He stood near an open window and held a small revolver in his hand. I told him to throw it into the street, and he did so. I then made him turn on the light, and he looked surprised and relieved to find that I was not pointing a pistol at him. He was a rather good looking young fellow and did not at all resemble a criminal. He admitted that this was not his first offense, however. He was a clerk in a Minneapolis dry goods house, and had got into a way of living which his salary would not support. He sat down on the foot of the bed and talked it all over with me.

"He was very pale and his chin quivered a little, but he did not do the baby act. He said he supposed that he would get a couple of years at Stillwater and that he deserved it. I sat up in bed and read him a lecture, then told him to go and sin no more. My words appeared to touch him. He shook my hand, thanked me for my forbearance and left me. I slept with a clear conscience until 8 o'clock. Then I awoke to find that watch, purse and scarfpin were all gone."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Plymouth and the Pilgrims.

Plymouth is a busy factory village. We are sent for landmarks of the past to Plymouth Rock, the cemetery on Burial hill and the museum in Pilgrim hall. No spot is quite so famous as Plymouth Rock. The stranger is surprised to find it so small, but it is a veritable rock, where rocks are not plentiful. It is protected by a stone inclosure with iron gates, through which we pass and step on the granite of dark gray color. The hardness of the stone makes it almost impossible for relic hunters to carry off pieces, but a French traveler said he saw bits of Plymouth Rock in many states of the Union. One large fragment is built into the wall of the Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn.

The original rock is in two halves, each about four feet in diameter, the under part somewhat larger than the upper. At the time of the Revolution it was taken up to be carried to the center of the town to make a rallying point for patriots. The rock was broken in two halves. The lower part was left in its original place, while the other half was carried to the town square.

In 1834 the rock took another journey to the lawn in front of Pilgrim hall, and was inclosed by an iron railing, on which are inscribed the names of forty-one who signed the compact on board the Mayflower. A third journey, however, has restored it to its original position.—Peterson's Magazine.

A Story That Varies.

There is a story, more or less diffused, of a young bride on her wedding day playing the game of hide and seek, and concealing herself in one of those ancient carved chests of large size. After she had got in the lid closed and she found herself unable to raise it again, or it fastened with a spring and she was shut in. Search was made for her in every quarter but the right one, and great perplexity and dismay were caused by her disappearance. It was not till years after when chance led to the opening of the chest that the body of the young bride was discovered and the mystery of her disappearance solved.

The story is found in so many places that it may be questioned whether it is true of any one of them. Rogers tells it of a palace in Modena. The chest in which the poor bride was found is shown at Bramshill, in Hampshire, the residence of Sir John Cope. Another similar chest, with precisely the same story attached to it, was long shown at Marwell Old Hall, between Winchester and Bishop's Waltham. The folk tale of Catskin or Peau d'Ane represents the girl flying with her bridal dresses from a marriage that is repugnant to her, and as this tale is found all over Europe, it may have metamorphosed itself into that of the bride who got into a chest and died there.—Cornhill Magazine.

Running Errands for Whole Towns.

Every one of the suburbs of New York maintains at least one errand man. Some of the larger towns keep two or three men. These men call themselves the town messengers. If a customer asks at a store for anything that is not in stock, the tradesman, if he is enterprising, says he will have it next day. He means that when the local messenger comes around he will tell him to go to a certain store in New York and get the article.

Such a messenger makes a round of all the stores in one of these little towns every night, and in the morning takes the cars or steamboat to the city and goes the rounds of the wholesale houses for the storeman, the grocer, the jeweler, the dentist, the dry goods man and all the rest. If he is smart he works the railroad for a pass on the ground that he feeds it with freight. If not, he buys a yearly commutation ticket, such as now gives a man rates as low as twenty cents for fifty miles and back.

These messengers are paid so much for each errand they run, and often make four or five dollars a day.—New York Sun.

African travelers tells us that the white rhinoceros frequently dies from eating poisonous plants which have no effect on the black one, probably because the fine scent of the latter tells him it is dangerous.

There is no question more frequently asked, or which a medical man finds more difficulty in answering to the satisfaction of himself and his patient, than "What do you wish me to eat?"

Robert Burton published the "Anatomy of Melancholy" at forty-five. It was written to relieve the strain of a mind bordering on insanity.

A CARGO OF ASPHALT.

A STICKY SUBSTANCE THAT IS IMPORTED FOR OUR ROADS.

Trinidad's Lake of Boiling Pitch Which Is Used in Making Asphalt—Something About the Island and Its Workers. How the Stuff Is Handled.

The asphalt barks from the West Indies are about the only vessels outside the coasting schooners that ever favor Washington with a visit. Two of them are lying off the wharf at the foot of New Hampshire avenue, and are well worth a visit.

Down in the hold the cargo looks like the edge of a dead lava field, black and seamed, and apparently as hard as rock; but the hardness is deceptive. Break up a bushel of the "pitch," as it is known to the trade, and pile the fragments on top of the big asphalt field which fills the whole of the lower deck, and by tomorrow morning they would disappear, sunken slowly back into the parent mass. This slow running quality makes the cargo one of the most detested among the captains in the island trade, for when the ship has been listed over to port or starboard for a couple of days, while running before a strong wind, the whole cargo will quietly shift over and have to be broken up and trimmed back to its proper position to keep the ship on even keel.

Trinidad, the island from which practically all the asphalt of the world is now drawn, is a British possession in the West Indies. It was one of the little spots of terra firma against which Columbus ran, when in 1498 he pushed his explorations farther westward in search of that mariners' phantasm, the northwest passage. The island was then inhabited solely by Caribs, a wild and warlike, but withal intelligent, race, not unlike the North American Indians, peculiar in their language, which, like the Choctaw of our own western tribe, has been mastered by few if any white men. For many years the island remained a neglected dependency of Spain, with a constantly dwindling population, mostly natives and imported negroes. In 1797 it passed into the hands of the British government and has remained an English colony since.

There are but two towns of importance on the island—Port of Spain and San Fernando. These live mostly by their imports, the chief productions of the island beyond its own necessities being asphalt and cocoanuts. The sugar crop is large, but it does not pay to export it. The population of the towns is mixed. English is the court language, but the majority of the people are negroes, descendants of the old slave stock, who talk a patois of mingled French, Spanish and English that is described as the "most back handedest lingo" any heathen ever invented.

Some of the original Caribs are still to be found among the island people, but they are rapidly disappearing, and in their place is now seen the imported cooly. The cooly trade, which was originally instituted to furnish cheap labor for the plantations, was in former times a terrible disgrace to the islands and partook of more than all the horrors of the African slave trade. Thousands of the miserable Asiatics were sacrified in the business by the greed and inhumanity of the masters who brought them over, and although imported under the guise of a labor contract, not one in hundreds of them ever lived to return home. Stringent laws governing the traffic are now enacted, however, and, what is more to the purpose, are well enforced, and many of the coolies by the time they have served their eight years' contract out are well to do citizens, being paid for their work by the piece and saving nearly all they earn.

The great pitch lake, which is the chief wonder and attraction of the island, is situated in a low, sandy stretch of the southwest coast, near Cape Corbaray. The surrounding country is low and malarial, in striking contrast to the high hills and rich woodlands of the coast farther back. The lake is owned by the British government and leased by it to an American firm which controls the trade for the United States. Their present lease has forty-two years yet to run. The laborers are all negroes, even the coolies shrinking from the heat and low fevers of the place. The lake itself is about a mile in diameter, hard at the edges and softening toward the middle. The surface is continually changing, apparently from some subterranean action, and little oases of dry land and even trees and shrubs will disappear in a single night and fresh islands of soil be reared in other places.

The lake is in all probability merely an unusually large deposit of bitumen or soft coal that has undergone its transformation from decaying vegetable matter in contact with water, and too near the surface for the earth pressure above to harden it thoroughly. Hundreds of the negroes the year around toil at the lake's edge, taking out cargo after cargo from the supply that seems never to diminish. They work under overseers of their own color and are paid at the rate of seventy-two cents a day. The asphalt crust is broken up with picks and crowbars, and is loaded on dump carts drawn by a single sun dried mule, in whom the constant boiling temperature seems to have concentrated all the native meanness of his species.

The carts crunch through a long sandy road down to the wharf at the water's edge, where the load is dumped and carried by wheelbarrows on board the lighters, which in turn carry it out to the ships, lying a half mile out in the shoal water. The rough lumps of pickings are hoisted on board in baskets and piled in the hold, where they sink down into a compact mass, requiring a fresh filling the next day, and so on till the solid cargo is completed.

When the vessel reaches its port of discharge the asphalt has to be broken up again before it can be removed from the hold. Owing to the viscus quality of the native "pitch," it has in the course of ages filtered through the sandy soil around the lakes, and of late the company has been threatened by a rival, which has begun mining operations on the island not far from the confines of the older company's territory, uncovering great fields of the asphalt that is, if anything, better after its filtering process than the original deposit.—Washington Post.

Poets Who Were Little.

Byron stood 5 feet 8 in his stockings—a liberal allowance of inches for a poet. But his friend Tom Moore redresses this disturbance of the average. Moore never reached five feet, save in his verses, the first of which, by the bye, he published under the pen name "Thomas Little." And when at length he doffed the mask some impudent wag hailed the change with the undeniable assertion, "Moore was Little and little is Moore."

We trust that Mr. Swinburne, the nightingale of our Nineteenth century "singing birds," will forgive us for branding him as every inch a poet, even to the fewness of his inches.—Gentleman's Magazine.

Bribed With Seaweed.

Seaweed has not even in our wildest moments ever been dreamed of as an instrument of electoral corruption. Yet the Tokyo newspapers just at hand contain an account of the trial of a member of the Japanese parliament who was accused of bribery by corrupting his constituents with presents of edible seaweed.

Georgia's Convict Laborers.

Georgia has 1,900 male penitentiary convicts, the lease of whom yields the state a yearly income of $25,000. The average cost of their maintenance is 33¼ cents per day.